


Texas Department of Health

The Commissioner's Report to the Board of Health

June 13, 2002

TDH Hot Topics



U.S. Health and Human Services approves Texas bioterrorism plans.

Texas is receiving \$59.7 million from the federal government to improve its preparedness for bioterrorism attacks. The total includes \$8.3 million for hospital preparedness and \$51.4 million from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Twenty percent of the CDC grant has already been received; the remaining 80 percent, minus only one small restriction, is being released now that the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has completed its review of the Texas public health preparedness grant application. HHS approved the Texas plan on June 6 with one restriction: funds requested for TDH pediatric antibiotic reserves, totaling \$56,000, are restricted pending further discussion regarding optimum use of stockpiles.

The Texas hospital preparedness plans, funded through a Health Resources and Services Administration grant, were also reviewed and approved for phase one. Funds for phase two are restricted until the plan is submitted on July 1 and approved.

HHS will require semi-annual progress reports on activities under both grants; the first report is due on October 1. More details are available on the TDH web page at <http://www.tdh.state.tx.us/>. For more information, contact Dennis Perrotta, at (512) 458-7219 or e-mail dennis.perrotta@tdh.state.tx.us.



\$1.3 million granted for tuberculosis research.

The Texas Department of Health (TDH) has been awarded a \$1.3 million grant by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to facilitate epidemiological research to improve the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of tuberculosis. The CDC awarded tuberculosis research funds to 20 sites in the United States and two in Canada. The money will be dispersed over a 10-year period. The TDH project, co-sponsored by Baylor College of Medicine, Houston, will fund a consortium of representatives from Texas academic institutions, local health departments, and the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. Officials say the 22 CDC-funded sites will promote population-based research and make tuberculosis prevention and control recommendations to the CDC.

In Texas the number of new cases of tuberculosis increased from 1,506 in 2000 to 1,643 last year. Most of the increase was in metropolitan areas of the state. Nationally, the number of reported new cases dropped from 16,377 in 2000 to 15,991 last year. For more information, contact Charles Wallace, Staff Epidemiologist, Infectious Disease Epidemiology & Surveillance Division, at (512) 458-7676 or e-mail at Charles.Wallace@tdh.state.tx.us.



TDH ends investigation into salmonellosis outbreak.

The Texas Department of Health (TDH) has ended an eight-week investigation of a salmonellosis outbreak in people who had consumed food or beverages at the Wyndham Anatole Hotel in Dallas in March and April. The investigation ended May 29. During the outbreak, some 50 people were confirmed to have salmonellosis, and 650 people from all 50 states reported having had symptoms consistent with the illness. Among the laboratory-confirmed cases, the first illness onset date was March 16. The last was April 25. Nine other food-service employees also became ill and tested positive for Salmonella.

TDH investigators believe a hotel food-service worker who did not have symptoms of the illness but who later tested positive for the bacterium that causes the illness may have been the way Salmonella was introduced into the hotel. The food most commonly consumed by those who tested positive for salmonellosis was salsa, which was made in the hotel.

The City of Dallas Department of Environmental Health Services, the Dallas County Health and Human Services Department, and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also were involved in the investigation. Salmonellosis is usually contracted by consuming contaminated food or drink. *For more information, contact Kathleen Shupe-Ricksecker, Staff Epidemiologist, Infectious Disease Epidemiology & Surveillance Division, at (512) 458-7676 or e-mail kathleen.shupe-ricksecker@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Vaccine shortages continue.

Varicella vaccine and PCV7 (Prevnar) vaccine remain on the list for vaccine shortages. Presently, Varicella vaccine orders are back-ordered for over six weeks. On the PCV7 front, TDH does not have any in its vaccine inventory. DTaP vaccine remains on the list of concerns. However, at this time, TDH is able to supply 30 days of inventory to providers enrolled in Texas Vaccines for Children (TVFC). *For more information, contact Judi Chase, Immunization Division, Vaccine Management Section, at (512) 458-7284, ext. 6266, or e-mail judi.chase@tdh.state.tx.us.*



New partnership to improve immunization rates.

Texas Vaccines for Children (TVFC) has joined resources with the Texas Medical Foundation (TMF) to assess and improve immunization practices and levels in Texas. This joint partnership will allow the TVFC and the TMF to assess immunization rates within provider offices. The TVFC is working diligently to improve practices and assistance to providers in reaching out to the children in Texas communities. Beginning January 1, 2003, TMF will conduct TVFC site visits in private provider offices statewide. *For more information, contact Jack Sims, Immunization Division, Texas Vaccines for Children Program, at (512) 458-7284, ext. 6215, or e-mail jack.sims@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Minority AIDS cases increase.

The number of reported minority AIDS cases increased in 2001 compared to 2000 (see chart below). No increase was observed in the number of cases among whites. *For more information, contact Sharon K. Melville, Director, HIV/STD Epidemiology Division, (512) 490-2545 or e-mail sharon.melville@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Increase in Texas Minority AIDS Cases Reported in 2001

Year of Report	Race/Ethnicity			
	White	African American	Hispanic	Other
2000	989	1,010	687	19
2001	976	1,155	821	25
% Change	-1.31%	14.36%	19.51%	31.58%
Total % change for minorities				16.61%

HIV/AIDS database updated through 1-22-2002



Waco leaders approve ordinance to limit public smoking.

On May 21, the Waco City Council met and in a 5-1 vote approved an ordinance that limits public smoking. Waco businesses can allow indoor smoking only in enclosed and separately ventilated areas or late at night (between 10 p.m. and 2 a.m.). The ordinance exempts restaurants with fewer than eight employees and other businesses with fewer than 15. Bars, defined as businesses that derive more than 50 percent of their revenue from alcohol and that don't serve food, would also be exempt. The ordinance became law on the Council's second reading June 4. Councilwoman Toni Herbert opposed the measure because she believed it fell short of protecting the public. The Safe Air for Everyone Coalition will be making a decision whether to continue with its plans to petition the city for a voter initiative on the original smoking ban proposal. *For more information, contact Sylvia Barron, at (254) 778-6744, ext. 2351 or e-mail sylvia.barron@tdh.state.tx.us.*



TDH begins surveying new moms about health.

Beginning in May, Texas began distributing the Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS), a survey sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and also supported with \$100,000 per year from the U.S. Health Services and Resources Administration. Texas now joins 30 other states in conducting ongoing monthly interviews of randomly selected new mothers in Texas. Each month, 300 new mothers will receive a short questionnaire about their behaviors and experiences during pregnancy and shortly after giving birth. The data will be used to identify high-risk women and children, monitor health status, and measure improvements in health. Data from the surveys will be used in planning, evaluation, and implementation of state and community programs and policies on perinatal health. *For more information, contact Linda Bultman, Director of Research and Public Health Assessment, at (512) 458-7371 or e-mail linda.bultman@tdh.state.tx.us.*



TDH in the news.

TDH responded to a total of 398 news media calls and questions in April and May. Leading topics of interest were the Salmonellosis investigation, the potential impact of the J-1 Visa restrictions, rabies vaccination, and lottery awards to hospitals. About 40 contacts were with national and international media including Dateline NBC, Discovery Channel, U.S. News and World Report, New York Times, New York Times Sunday Magazine, American Medical News, Physicians' Financial News, Men's Journal, Associated Press (AP), United Press International (UPI), National Public Radio (on J-1 Visa restrictions), USA Today, Boston Globe, NBC News (on the 10 most deadly

industries in Texas) and World TV–England (on Chagas disease). *For more information, contact Doug McBride, TDH Press Officer, at (512) 458-7400 or e-mail doug.mcbride@tdh.state.tx.us.*



White House brings Texas parenting magazine to nation.

The *Take Time for Kids* magazine has been adapted at the national level by the Bush administration as part of its early-childhood initiative. *Take Time for Kids* is a parent-education magazine developed by staff of the Child Wellness Division, Bureau of Children's Health. The magazine is being distributed nationally as *Healthy Start, Grow Smart*. The TDH assisted the U.S. departments of Agriculture, Education, and Health and Human Services with the development of the national magazine using *Take Time for Kids* content. The *Take Time for Kids* magazine was developed in 1999 in conjunction with Laura Bush, First Lady of Texas. The magazine contains age-appropriate information about nutrition, child development, health, safety, dental health, nurturing, and resources for Texas parents. TDH programs developed and produced the magazine, which was distributed to Medicaid parents in Texas from 1999 through January 2002. The magazine consists of 13 issues, in English and Spanish, each issue devoted to a baby's age, from newborn through 12 months. All issues can be viewed at <http://www.tdh.state.tx.us/ttfk>. The publication is available from the U.S. Department of Education at (877) 433-7827 or at <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/teachingouryoungest/>. *For more information, contact Jere Brewer, at (512) 458 7111, ext. 2133, or e-mail jere.brewer@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Disease Outbreaks / Investigations / Recalls



Late-season influenza B breaks out in Galveston, El Paso.

The TDH laboratory continues to identify influenza B from specimens submitted for viral isolation. The flu B identified by the lab has been further analyzed by the CDC and has been identified as influenza B (Hong Kong). This Hong Kong strain is responsible for flu outbreaks in Galveston and El Paso counties and has also been identified in Travis County. It is from an antigenically distinct lineage from the flu B that has circulated in the United States for the past 14 years. Several aspects of this continued flu circulation need to be mentioned: first, this flu activity is unusually late in our "typical" flu season; second, this is a strain of flu for which children under the age of 14-15 years have no protection; and third, this flu B strain was not a component of last year's flu vaccine but will be a component of next year's flu vaccine. The Office of Communications issued a news release on June 6 about the late-season outbreaks. *For more information, contact Neil Pascoe, Infectious Disease Epidemiology and Surveillance Division, at (512) 458-7676 or e-mail neil.pascoe@tdh.state.tx.us*



Undercooked chicken source of salmonellosis outbreak in Ector County.

Ector County reported seven confirmed cases (three of which required hospitalization) of salmonellosis associated with a local restaurant. Undercooked chicken was identified as the source of the outbreak. The restaurant is currently closed and is not expected to reopen. *For more information, contact Sarana Savage at (915) 571-4146 or e-mail sarana.savage@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Pertussis symptoms affect 100 in Marble Falls.

Two laboratory-confirmed cases of pertussis were reported from the Marble Falls area in early May. The first case is a 12-year-old girl, the daughter of the second case, a 48-year-old male. A sibling who attends a high school in the community also had a history of cough. Region 7 has coordinated the investigation of the schools involved. The Marble

Falls ISD sent out a letter to the parents of its students describing the situation and making recommendations. Region 7 also sent out a letter to physicians in Burnet and surrounding counties notifying them of the reported cases. Two press releases helped inform the public. Day-care centers in the affected areas were also notified. More than 100 cases of individuals with symptoms are being investigated. *For more information, contact Laura Tabony or David Bastis, Immunization Division, Epidemiology and Surveillance Program, at (512) 458-7284 or e-mail laura.tabony@tdh.state.tx.us or david.bastis@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Hantavirus strikes 3 in first disease cluster in a family; 2 die.

In late April, a person in the Texas Panhandle died due to hantavirus pulmonary syndrome (HPS). Another family member who visited the same household had died nine days previously. In retrospect, the cause of death in this relative was most probably also HPS; however, no clinical specimens were available for diagnostic confirmation. A third member of the family, who lives in Arizona and had spent about a week in the home after the deaths, is recovering from HPS. This event is significant because it is the first time that multiple cases of HPS have occurred in a single household. Zoonosis Control personnel have responded to numerous telephone calls regarding risk and precautionary measures since this disease cluster has been reported by the media. *For more information, contact Jim Schuermann, Zoonosis Control Division, at (512) 458-7255 or e-mail jim.schuermann@tdh.state.tx.us.*



5 high school students in Hardin County infected with staph.

On May 21, the Region 6/5 South Epidemiology Program and the Hardin County Health Department performed an investigation on staph infections in a Hardin County high school. The investigation identified five staph-like skin infections in the school from January to February this year. The infected students were not in the same classroom but 4 of them were on the same athletic program and one of them was culture-confirmed. As of now, most of the cases are reported to be either recovered or improving after antibiotic treatment. Hardin County Health Department gave the school information about how to prevent the spread of staphylococcal infection and sent a letter to local physicians addressing the situation and the responsive antibiotics for treatment. *For more information, contact Huai Lin, Epidemiology Program Manager, at (713) 767-3232 or e-mail huai.lin@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Owens Sausage recalls products after inspection finds contamination.

Routine sampling of products at a Dallas-area Owens Sausage facility found *Listeria monocytogenes* in three lots of products, which the firm voluntarily recalled. Products included sausage biscuits and sausage-and-egg sandwiches. Much of this facility is under inspection by the USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service, which is charged with inspection of most meat and poultry plants in the nation. However, sandwich-type products are under the jurisdiction of the Food and Drug Administration and TDH. The Manufactured Foods Division at TDH has been in contact with USDA regarding the in-plant conditions that appear to be responsible for the *Listeria* contamination. Press releases done by TDH and the company notified the public. *For more information, contact Dan Sowards, Manufactured Foods Division, at (512) 719-0243 or e-mail dan.sowards@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Industrial catering company issues year's second recall

A Grand Prairie food catering business that operates many catering trucks in the Dallas/Fort Worth area has recalled several of its products. The facility is under joint jurisdiction of the TDH Manufactured Foods Division and the TDH Meat Safety Assurance Division. Routine sampling of products from this facility found several products contaminated with *Listeria monocytogenes*. The firm had an earlier recall

directed by the Meat Safety Assurance Division this year as well. TDH and the company issued press releases to notify the public. *For more information contact Dan Sowards, Manufactured Foods Division, at (512) 719-0243 or e-mail dan.sowards@tdh.state.tx.us.*

New Staff



Commissioner names senior assistant.

Rocco Pelosi began his position as the Senior Assistant to the Commissioner of Health, on Monday, June 10. Mr. Pelosi will coordinate key initiatives and activities for the Commissioner of Health, the Executive Deputy Commissioner, and the Chief Operating Officer. Pelosi has worked in public health for more than 30 years and brings expertise and experience in local public health and in building rapport with public health partners and stakeholders. Among his many public health roles, Pelosi has served as director of Communicable Disease Prevention for the Austin Travis County Health and Human Services Department and as assistant to the executive manager of the Travis County Health Department. He has also served as manager of the Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD) Clinic for the Austin Travis County Health and Human Services.

In 1986, Rocco was the first HIV-AIDS educator for the Texas Department of Health and served as prevention manager for the HIV-AIDS Division. He worked on field assignments for the San Antonio Metro Health District and the Houston City Health Department and in field operations for TDH-Austin's STD Control Division. A native of Galveston, Rocco is a graduate of Tulane University. *For more information, contact Sandy Schroder at 458-7376 or e-mail sandy.schroder@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Business / Administration



New advertising agencies selected.

Vendors have been selected for the blanket contract for TDH advertising. They are Sherry Matthews Advocacy Marketing and Tuerff-Davis Enviromedia, both of Austin, and Interlex of San Antonio. Negotiations were finalized in late May. The Office of Communications will manage this contract. TDH is focused on building a system that stimulates competition within the contract, offers a level playing field for vendors, guards the programs' interest in ease and timeliness, preserves the marketing integrity of past efforts that could evolve in the future, and ensures the "best value" standard for agency procurements. *For more information, contact Annette Riggio at 458-7111, ext. 6394, or e-mail annette.riggio@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Human Resources implementation team leads HHS consolidations.

HHS Consolidation work groups are continuing their work, with the most notable progress made by the Human Resources Implementation Team, which drafted an implementation plan and presented it to the Oversight Committee and agency CEOs on May 28. Specific budget figures are not included; however, the plan provides an explanation of how staffing will be determined at the 60 percent and 80 percent levels. Team members are prepared to resume meeting as needed. Dates have been set to review a draft Personnel Manual, and a timetable set for review through all HHS agencies has been established. *For more information, contact Ernie Klatt at (512) 458-7302 or e-mail ernie.klatt@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Information Resources Strategic Plan sees opportunities.

The following four events have had a significant impact upon our business. All four have occurred since our current plan was developed, and all four create opportunities for TDH

to take large steps towards data, data transmission, application integration, and security standards: (1) E-government is an area that Texas has focused on as a means to improve service to citizens. (2) Rider 2 to our appropriations bill from last session required TDH to develop and implement a comprehensive business improvement plan. (3) The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) have a very significant impact on TDH. The impact of this is becoming clearer as rules are finalized and we complete our assessment. (4) And finally, September 11 has changed all our lives and has affected the way agencies conduct business. Its impact upon public health has been enormous, and TDH has responded aggressively. *For more information, contact Tom Thornton, at (512) 458-7271 or e-mail tom.thornton@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Health and Human Services Administrative System on schedule.

Implementation of the HHSAS Human Resource Management System (HRMS) is on schedule for a “go live” date of December 2002. TDH subject-matter experts have been working with members of the HHSAS HRMS project team on identifying the new “to be” business processes and conducting testing of PeopleSoft through prototyping sessions. Identifying trainers for end users is under way and may include trainers currently staffed in the Human Resources Development Division. *For more information, contact Sharon Brewer at (512) 458-7456 or e-mail sharon.brewer@tdh.state.tx.us.*



HHSAS Financials improving functionality after implementation.

HHSAS Financials post-implementation efforts have continued to address issues as they are identified as well as to further improve the functionality of the system and enhance the skills of users. These efforts, which include the retention and transformation of key members of the implementation team into a production support team, will remain in place and continue as needed as we move from an implementation mode to an operational system.

In February 2002, key end users were reconvened to provide further training and assistance so that they could function as subject-matter experts in their departments to provide support closer to the end users. They have the advantage of working in the same functional areas and have a better familiarity with the end users and the types of issues they face. Follow-up meetings have been held with every organizational unit in the department where all end users were brought together with their management and their subject-matter experts present to discuss any issues, to ensure that everyone in the department knew the subject-matter experts in their area, and to ensure that everyone was aware of the informational tools available on the website. A tracking log was maintained to ensure that any questions or problems not resolved at the time would be subsequently researched and answers provided. *For more information, contact Paul Roch at (512) 458-7425 or e-mail paul.roch@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Implementation team consolidating all HHS administrative training.

The Administrative Training Implementation Team is working towards consolidation, by Sept. 1, of all HHS administrative training within an Administrative Training Department that reports to the Enterprise Human Resources Office by September 1. In-scope training includes: Leadership, Management and Supervisory Skills, Civil Rights/EEO, Business and Professional Skills, Interpersonal Skills, End User Software Training, HR Policy, and New Employee Orientation. Program-related training and agency-specific training is out of scope. All Admin training positions will be posted Enterprise-wide. *For more information, contact Mary Castleberry at (512) 490-2522 or e-mail mary.castleberry@tdh.state.tx.us.*



FAIR teams implement initiatives to consolidate business-practice evaluation.

TDH has formed Fiscal and Administrative Improvement Response (FAIR) teams to address issues directly related to TDH consolidation as defined in the Business Practices Evaluation Report (Bomer report). The kick-off meeting for FAIR was held May 28, with TDH leadership providing information on initiatives to be covered by FAIR, a vision for each team, as well as goals and guiding principles to guide the process. Teams will address issues in Budget, Accounting, Purchasing and Contracting, Grants Management, Information Resources, and Human Resources. Over the next few months, FAIR teams will be working in these areas to develop sound fiscal and administrative policy as well as effective and efficient fiscal, administrative, and communication processes with emphasis on customer service, quality assurance, and conservation of agency resources.

For more information, contact Machele Pharr at (512) 458-7640 or e-mail machele.pharr@tdh.state.tx.us.

Program Updates



Gulf Nuclear cleanup contracted by EPA.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is performing a Superfund cleanup of the site of a defunct licensee, Gulf Nuclear, Inc., which manufactured sealed sources. The EPA has contracted a company to perform the cleanup. TDH Bureau of Radiation Control is providing health physics support and is overseeing the work to ensure that it is being performed safely and the site is decontaminated to limits authorized by 25 TAC 289, Texas Regulations for Control of Radiation. The cleanup, expected to take six months and to cost upwards of \$8 million, consists of the removal of contaminated buildings and all distinct sources of radiation at two sites in the Houston area. The EPA is disposing of all contaminated materials and sources at a licensed disposal facility. *For more information, contact Ruben Cortez, Bureau of Radiation Control, at (512) 834-6688, ext. 2004, or e-mail ruben.cortez@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Strategic planning continues on EMS/trauma system.

The Governor's EMS and Trauma Advisory Council (GETAC) continues to make significant progress on its strategic planning process required by EMS legislation (H.B. 2446) passed during the past legislative session. The data has been analyzed from the surveys received from EMS firms, First Responder organizations, EMS medical directors, and hospitals, as well as from the input at the six public hearings and quarterly GETAC meetings to date. At a weekend retreat in late April and an all-day workshop in late May, GETAC members developed a vision and draft mission/goals/objectives for where Texas EMS regulation and EMS/trauma systems should be in the year 2010. They plan another all-day workshop in July to continue work on the goals/objectives as well as strategies to achieve them and a final review of the draft plan at their quarterly meeting in August. The final plan is scheduled to be printed in September for dissemination in October. *For more information, contact Kathryn C. Perkins, Bureau of Emergency Management, at (512) 834-6700 or e-mail kathy.perkins@tdh.state.tx.us.*



National testing set for EMS certification/licensure.

The Bureau of Emergency Management has announced implementation dates for National Registry (NR) testing of initial EMS certification/licensure candidates. Basic certification exams will begin in October 2002 and Intermediate/Paramedic exams will begin in February 2003. This means that any person seeking initial certification/licensure at these levels who has not taken an initial exam by the pertinent date will take the NR

exam instead of a state-developed exam. Rollouts will be conducted this summer, with additional training available during the annual Texas EMS Conference in November. *For more information, contact Jim Arnold, Bureau of Emergency Management, at (512) 834-6700 or e-mail jim.arnold@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Potential providers briefed on HIV prevention plans for 2003 to 2007.

The new HIV prevention plans for 2003-2007, known as the Area Action Plans, are now posted on the TDH website at: <http://www.tdh.state.tx.us/hivstd/areaplan/default.htm>. These plans were developed by the Community Planning groups with technical assistance from TDH, and are unique for the six prevention plan areas in Texas. This is a year of firsts: first time for the prevention plans to be web-based; first time for the plans to reflect evidence-based interventions to be targeted to specific, prioritized subpopulations; and the first time that the plans will be the absolute drivers for funding the state's HIV prevention program. Request For Proposals (RFP) on HIV prevention is based on the new Area Action Plans. Planning staff planned and facilitated briefings in the six plan areas across the state from March 25 to April 5 to allow Community Planning groups to present the new Area Action Plans to potential providers in the area. About 175 providers attended the briefings. *For more information, contact Shirley Broussard, HIV/STD Health Resources Division, at (512) 490-2525 or e-mail shirley.broussard@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Policies on planning HIV services under revision per public comment.

HIV/STD Health Resources Division staff reviewed public comments submitted on six new policies related to HIV services planning. The public comment period ended March 21. Policies will be reissued after minor revisions and are expected to be finalized in June 2002. *For more information, contact Shirley Broussard, HIV/STD Health Resources Division, at (512) 490-2525 or e-mail shirley.broussard@tdh.state.tx.us.*



HIV Request For Proposals on track.

The HIV Prevention Request for Proposals (RFP) was completed and mailed. Staff conducted final planning for the pre-application conference and also met with the program managers to make several addenda to the RFP that was released on April 29. A new RFP was begun this month for two scopes of work for the Infertility Prevention Project. The two RFPs also required regional public hearings. Letters were prepared for regional staff, and hearing guidance was updated and sent to regional staff. A hearing schedule was planned with regional staff, and letters were prepared for legislators and applicants. *For more information, contact Dianne Green, HIV/STD Health Resources Division, (512) at 490-2515, or e-mail dianne.green@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Article Published in *The Journal of Texas Medicine*.

Five staff of the HIV/STD Epidemiology Division and the associate commissioner for Disease Control and Prevention were among the authors of a journal article published this month in *The Journal of Texas Medicine*, Volume 98, Number 5, May 2002, pages 50-55. The article, entitled "Prenatal Testing in Private OB/GYN Practices in Texas," was written by Ann S. Robbins, Ph.D.; Cheryl L.E. Jablonski, M.A.; Barry E. Mitchell, M.P.H.; Sharon A. King, M.A.; Sharon K. Melville, M.D., M.P.H.; and Sharilyn K. Stanley, M.D. *For more information, contact Sharon K. Melville, Director, HIV/STD Epidemiology Division, at (512) 490-2545 or e-mail sharon.melville@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Texas HIV Medication Program getting input on budget challenges.

The HIV/STD Clinical Resources Division, in cooperation with the chief of the Bureau of HIV and STD Prevention, is developing strategies to address projected budget challenges in the Texas HIV Medication Program. Division staff will conduct meetings in communities across Texas over the next several months to obtain stakeholder input into any possible strategies to address the issues. *For more information, contact Linda S. Moore, HIV/STD Clinical Resources Division, at (512) 490-2505 or e-mail linda.moore@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Regional public hearings ongoing for grant applications for HIV activities.

Regional public hearings on grant applications for HIV activities (Early Access to Clinical and Preventive Services for Persons with HIV Disease and HIV Prevention Projects) were held in May and will continue being held in June and July throughout the state. *For more information, contact Dianne Green, Development Unit Manager, HIV/STD Health Resources Division, at (512) 490-2515 or e-mail dianne.green@tdh.state.tx.us.*



TDH campaigns for appropriate use of antibiotics.

Infectious Disease Epidemiology and Surveillance (IDEAS) staff are preparing to present a poster at a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) meeting in Atlanta, regarding TDH activities to promote appropriate use of antibiotics. IDEAS educational activities include the Antibiotic Bowl, scheduled annually in March and April, which targets 3rd- and 4th-year medical students, and a basic course for primary-care physicians and other clinicians entitled "Judicious Antibiotic Use: Fighting Antibiotic Resistance." At least six courses for clinicians will be scheduled from July through December this year throughout the state. These activities are partly funded by the CDC. *For more information, contact Olga Nuno, Infectious Disease Epidemiology and Surveillance Division, at (512) 458-7676 or e-mail olga.nuno@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Epidemiologists initiate bioterrorism educational program.

The Bioterrorism (BT) Educational Program was initiated this month. The first course, Principles of Epidemiology, is scheduled for the last week of July and will include epidemiologists in the emergency response teams (ERTs) from around the state, as well as the ERTs registered nurses. The second and third course, Basic Epidemiology Workshop, is scheduled for Aug. 29-30 in Austin, and Sept. 26-27 in Arlington. The Austin workshop will provide outbreak-investigation training for the ERTs public health technicians, other ERTs team members, and other regional staff who need this training. The Arlington course will focus on training local and regional staff from Public Health Regions 2/3. A fourth course is tentatively planned for November in West Texas. Several regions have already requested that this course be offered in their areas. To address the multiple responses, we are researching the use of polycom technology. Other courses that are in the design process include an Infectious Disease Workshop that will provide cross-training for those in other areas of the health department (in preparation for a bioterrorism event or other large state emergency), an epidemiological software course, and a field epidemiology course. *For more information, contact Kathleen Shupe-Ricksecker, Infectious Disease Epidemiology and Surveillance Division, at (512) 458-7676 or e-mail kathleen.shupe-ricksecker@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Hepatitis C staff busy educating about prevention.

A prevention radio/TV campaign targeting young African-American males ages 15-19 in East Texas was conducted June 3 and will continue through August 11. The TDH hepatitis C staff, in conjunction with Region 6/5S staff, conducted a presentation on April

15 about the campaign to the Jefferson County health authority, school officials, local counseling and testing site contractors, and the Port Arthur and Beaumont local health departments. The hepatitis C staff also developed a survey to evaluate the campaign.

Staff interviewed applicants for the hepatitis C state planner position and an offer was accepted by Jacquelyn Gray, who began employment with TDH on June 3.

The staff facilitated the quarterly meeting of the Hepatitis C State Workgroup meeting held April 30 and attended by 34 members. Presentations included two guest speakers: Eleton Woolsey, benefits coordinator of Austin-Travis County Mental Health and Mental Retardation, presented information about Social Security benefits and hepatitis C; Shahriar Tavakoli-Tabasi, M.D., staff physician of the Houston Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center, discussed the Houston VA program. TDH staffer Larry Cuellar, projects specialist manager with the HIV/STD Health Resources Division, presented results of a recent survey analyzing pharmacists' attitudes towards providing syringes to the public in pharmacies.

The hepatitis C staff coordinated and staffed booths at the Texas Medical Association's Tex Med 2002 physicians' annual conference held April 18-20 in Dallas; HepHike, sponsored by the Liver Foundation of Central Texas, held April 27, in Austin; and the Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship health fair in Dallas on May 25.

Staff attended the CDC-sponsored Hepatitis C Coordinators Conference in Atlanta on April 8-10. A presentation was given on our minority outreach component.

The "knife-thrower" public-service announcement about preventing hepatitis C was awarded second place in the public-service category of the 2002 International Creative Summit Awards. More than 2,900 entries were received from 17 countries. The hepatitis C initiative was also chosen by Commissioner Eduardo Sanchez as the TDH program nominee for the 2002 Association of State and Territorial Officials (ASTHO) Vision Award. *For more information, contact Gary Heseltine, Infectious Disease Epidemiology and Surveillance Division, at (512) 458-7676 or e-mail gary.heseltine@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Binational TB Project coordinators meet.

On May 24, the coordinators of the binational TB projects met to discuss activities in the various projects. They also received a briefing by the Office of Border Health and the coordinator for the Ten Against TB initiative. Other topics of discussion included infrastructure development, funding and resource assessment, the Green Light Committee application and future directions. *For more information contact Charles Wallace, TB Elimination Division, at (512) 458-7447 or e-mail charles.wallace@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Regional TB program managers meet.

On May 31, the managers of the public health region TB projects met to discuss activities in the various regions and other topics concerning TB prevention and control. *For more information, contact Charles Wallace, TB Elimination Division, at (512) 458-7447 or e-mail charles.wallace@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Steering council of Ten Against TB meets.

On June 3, the Steering Council of Ten Against TB met in Chihuahua, Mexico. The members were to select a permanent secretariat for TATB, approve a proposal to be presented to the Border Health Commission, present a list of activities and future TATB

needs, decide on uses of HRSA funds, and hear an update on the binational TB card and the USAID/SSA TB project. *For more information, contact Jose Moreira, TB Elimination Division, at (512) 458-7447 or e-mail jose.moreira@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Texas poster enters national contest to prevent poisonings.

An award ceremony was held on May 21, to honor the winner of the 2002 Poison Prevention Week (PPW) poster contest. This year's winner is Ashley Juarez, a 9-year-old 4th-grader from Lasara ISD and the daughter of Mike and Vicky Juarez. The theme of the poster is "POISON – Easy to get into – Hard to get out of." Alan Fyke, director of Strategic Accounts for HUMCO, presented Ashley with a bouquet of roses, along with a Dell Computer with monitor, CD/RW and Zip drives, and a Lexmark color printer. HUMCO, a pharmaceutical company from Texarkana, sponsors the award for the state-level winner of the poster contest. The company has been a strong supporter of Poison Prevention Week activities for many years.

Channel 4 TV and The Valley Morning Star, both out of Harlingen, were on hand to provide coverage of the event. Lasara is a small ranching community in Willacy County located west of Raymondville. Ashley's poster was submitted to the PPW poster contest conducted by the South Texas Poison Center and will be forwarded to the American Association of Poison Control Centers (AAPCC) to compete in the national poster contest. The national winner will appear on the official poster for the 2003 AAPCC Poison Prevention Week. Last year's Texas state winner won the national contest and is pictured on the official poster for the 2002 PPW campaign. *For more information, contact Judy Whitfield, Poison Control Program Coordinator, at (512) 458-7268 or e-mail judy.whitfield@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Inactive wood-treatment facility in Conroe gets EPA attention.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) have asked the Environmental Epidemiology and Toxicology Division at TDH to assist them with evaluating the potential public health impact of an inactive wood-treatment facility located in Conroe (Montgomery County). About 25-30 acres of the 147-acre property are contaminated with arsenic, chromium, pentachlorophenol (PCP), polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), and dioxins/furans.

The site is bordered by residential property (trailer park subdivision) to the southwest, and an elementary school is approximately 200 feet from the northern border. The general drainage of the site is to the east and west through an onsite drainage canal. East of the site is Little Caney Creek. West of the site is Stewarts Creek. Both creeks flow into the San Jacinto River and ultimately empty into the Gulf of Mexico.

The site is fenced and has limited access across most of the perimeter. However, the fence is incomplete along the northeast side of the property, and the entrance gate is never secured.

Releases of materials are visible around the site and have been documented by analytical results. Both the EPA and the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission (TNRCC) witnessed contaminated surface water emanating from the facility in numerous locations flowing into Little Caney Creek. Further releases are expected as every rainfall event causes the unsecured contamination to enter the on-site drainage and flow to the creek. Additional releases can be expected due to the deteriorating condition of the

storage tanks and vessels. It is expected that the site will be placed on the National Priority List (NPL).

EPA is asking for ATSDR/TDH support in health education, community involvement, and input on sampling locations. TDH staff have met with EPA at the site and attended a briefing that EPA is coordinating with Conroe officials. We will notify TDH regional staff and local health departments that we'll be in the area. There is a good chance that this site may generate significant public interest. *For more information, contact John F. Villanacci, Susan Prosperie, or Nancy Ingram, at (512) 458-7269 or e-mail john.villanacci@tdh.state.tx.us; susan.prosperie@tdh.state.tx.us; nancy.ingram@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Grant from EPA to fund educating border schoolchildren about pesticides.

The Pesticide Exposure Surveillance in Texas (PEST) Program (Environmental Epidemiology and Toxicology Division) has received a \$24,000 grant from EPA to pilot an educational program on the risks of pesticide poisoning for elementary schoolchildren along the Texas-Mexico border. Elementary schoolchildren in Cameron, Hidalgo, and El Paso counties will be trained about the hazards associated with pesticides and how to prevent potential exposures. Another project aim is to encourage children to take the safety information home and discuss it with their parents. PEST program staff will also offer program material and training to interested Mexican counterparts who may wish to develop their own self-sustaining training programs on safety. *For more information, contact Rachel Rosales at (512) 458-7269 or e-mail rachel.rosales@tdh.state.tx.us.*



300 in El Paso given free screenings for oral cancers.

Office of Tobacco Prevention and Control regional and central-office staff joined forces with El Paso del Norte Foundation and the El Paso Diablos baseball team for a free oral cancer screening. Three hundred people received free oral cancer screening, 100 of whom were teens. *For more information, contact Dr. Philip Huang, Bureau of Chronic Disease and Tobacco Prevention, at (512) 458-7200 or e-mail philip.huang@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Diabetes project on U.S./Mexico border surveying households.

Diabetes Program staff participated in the April 3-4 meeting on the U.S./Mexico Border Binational Diabetes project. Approximately 4,000 household surveys of selected border communities across four U.S. and six Mexico states will be completed by July 1. Phase 2 of the project will involve testing interventions in communities on both sides of the border. *For more information, contact Dr. Jan Ozias, Texas Diabetes Council/Program, at (512) 458-7490 or e-mail jan.ozias@tdh.state.tx.us.*



CDC calls TDH molecular sequencing 'pioneering.'

The Viral Isolation section chief at TDH was told by the CDC investigator in charge of its enterovirus information laboratory that TDH efforts to type enteroviruses using molecular sequencing is "pioneering." A staffer at the Molecular Biology section at TDH has identified, by sequencing, all specimens requiring a serum-neutralization test. This streamlining of the serum-neutralization test allowed us to save time and Rhesus Monkey Kidney (RMK) cell-culture tubes. TDH will continue efforts to sequence all enterovirus isolates that have been previously sequenced at CDC. Comparing TDH sequences with the CDC sequences will provide the basis for validating this methodology for typing enteroviruses. Although not yet on-line, the use of sequencing information to identify enteroviruses, which do not have a satisfactory monoclonal antibody for immunofluorescence typing, will herald a new generation of shorter turn-around times

and less costly results. *For more information, contact Maryann Patterson, Medical Virology Branch, Microbiological Services Division, at (512) 458-7515 or e-mail maryann.patterson@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Perchlorate found in Midland water.

As part of the U.S. EPA's Unregulated Contaminants Monitoring Rule (UCMR), drinking-water samples are analyzed for the anion perchlorate. Perchlorate was detected in water samples from the McMillen well field near Midland and the City of Levelland's Lee Street well field. TNRCC issued a press release on April 23. Research has indicated that perchlorate may be associated with effects such as lowered IQ and delayed development of motor skills in infants and young children. *For more information, contact Dwight Schaeper, Environmental Sciences Division, at (512) 458-7318 or e-mail dwight.schaeper@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Vaccines to be delivered to providers' doors.

The contract for third-party vaccine distribution has been negotiated with General Injectables and Vaccines (GIV) of Bastian, Va. The new vaccine distribution will begin on July 8, starting with Region 6/5S, and will be fully implemented in September. GIV has a facility in Grapevine from which most vaccines will be shipped throughout Texas. Although this will be a challenge in the beginning, providers will no longer have to supply staff to drive and pick up the vaccine needed to vaccinate the children who are eligible to receive it, since the vaccine will be delivered to the provider's door. *For more information, contact Judi Chase, Immunization Division, Vaccine Management Section, at (512) 458-7284, ext. 6266, or e-mail judi.chase@tdh.state.tx.us.*



General recommendations and new vaccine-information statements distributed.

The new *General Recommendations on Immunization* and the new *Vaccine Information Statements* booklet were distributed to the regions, local health departments and districts, WIC local agencies, and Texas Vaccines for Children program providers. The general recommendations on immunization by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) were last published in 1994. The principal changes in the current publication include expansion of the discussion of vaccination spacing and timing, recommendations for vaccinations administered by an incorrect route, information regarding needle-free injection technology, vaccination of children adopted from other countries, timing of live-virus vaccination and tuberculosis screening, expansion of the discussion and tables of contraindications and precautions regarding vaccinations, and the addition of a directory of immunization resources. *For more information, contact Clara Taylor, Communication and Training Program, Immunization Division, at (512) 458-7284, ext. 6530, or e-mail clara.taylor@tdh.state.tx.us.*



2002 Texas Vaccines for Children annual provider re-enrollment made easier.

During the 2002 calendar year, the annual TVFC re-enrollment will be conducted in conjunction with visits to provider sites. The goal is to minimize the time that a provider must spend on yearly paperwork. Furthermore, the provider will also have the added benefit of a TVFC representative to assist with the completion of the re-enrollment paperwork. *For more information, contact Jack Sims, Immunization Division, Texas Vaccines for Children Program, at (512) 458-7284, ext. 6215, or e-mail jack.sims@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Nursing Excellence Gold Award earned by TDH School Health Program's website.

The TDH School Health Program website was given a Nursing Excellence Gold Award in April by Nurse-Recruiters.com, which grants Nursing Excellence awards to websites

that show “best practices” in nursing and web design. A Gold Award is the group’s highest honor. Sites are also judged on the quality of their interaction with visitors both in and out of the nursing profession. To read more about the award, visit <http://nurse-recruiter.com/goldsites.html>. To visit the TDH School Health Program website, go to www.tdh.state.tx.us/schoolhealth. For more information, contact Michelle McComb, School Health Program, at (512) 458-7111, ext. 3307, or e-mail michelle.mccomb@tdh.state.tx.us.

Regional Updates

Public Health Region 1



Public Health Preparedness planning under way.

Region 1 staff members are working on the public health preparedness and response planning process with the 35 counties in the region without a local public health department. Meetings have been held with the Panhandle Regional Planning Commission and the South Plains Association of Governments to discuss plans to develop bioterrorism readiness and response. County officials and regional staff have worked to identify county needs and deficiencies. Region 1 will be receiving approximately \$1.09 million from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to assist the 35 counties with their planning process. For more information, contact Jon Huss, Deputy Regional Director, at (806) 767-0479 or e-mail jon.huss@tdh.state.tx.us.



El Dia de los Ninos draws regional participants.

Staff members from Region 1 participated April 30 in Lubbock’s first El Dia de los Ninos, a celebration of children to be held annually. The event was organized by the VOICES (Volunteers Offering Involvement in Communities to Expand Services) Coalition and featured a wide variety of booths and presentations on topics such as health and fitness, education, and drug-abuse prevention. Region 1 staff provided information about injury prevention during the event. For more information, contact Peggy Johnson-Roberson, Public Health Promotion regional manager, at (806) 767-0489 or e-mail peggy.johnson@tdh.state.tx.us.

Public Health Region 2/3



Fewer urban animals infected with rabies.

Region 2/3 has had 212 reports of animals infected with rabies so far this year (up to May 21). Last year at this same time there were 277 reports of animals infected with rabies. The reported cases have decreased in the metroplex (Tarrant, Dallas, and Denton counties), but we are seeing an increase in the counties to the east and south of the metroplex. These counties include Grayson and Collin counties to the east and Ellis and Navarro counties to the south. These counties hold mostly rural populations, and the decrease in the number of rabies reports may be due to a decrease in sightings by humans.

Our region’s zoonosis-control veterinarian gave a rabies presentation to the Texas Environmental Health Association in Mesquite, as well as to graduate students at the University of North Texas School of Public Health in Fort Worth. For more information, contact Connie Lindley, Zoonosis Control Veterinarian, at (817) 264-4921 or e-mail connie.lindley@tdh.state.tx.us.

Public Health Region 4 & 5 North



Group seeks to improve health in Rusk County.

Members of the Rusk County community gathered for the 2002 Rusk County Future Search Conference on May 13-15. The group convened to answer the question, “How do we improve the health of the people of Rusk County?” Attendance averaged 47 participants each day of the meeting. Participants represented eight different stakeholder groups: health-care providers (both in-patient and out-patient), business and industry, local government and law enforcement, education, faith-based organizations, mental health/disability service providers, and health and human service organizations. Sixteen project-action teams were formed in order to bring about the envisioned future of improving the health of the people of Rusk County. The three-member TDH Rusk County Pilot Project team will assist in follow-up and will provide technical assistance to these teams. *For more information, contact Debbye Jarrell at (903) 657-6310 or e-mail debbye.jarrell@tdh.state.tx.us.*



TDH staffers speak at East Texas Minority Health Network Conference.

The fifth annual East Texas Minority Health Network Conference was held in Tyler on May 30 and 31 with approximately 300 persons in attendance. The theme of this year’s program was “Improving Health through Communication, Collaboration, and Coordination.” An employee at the Central Office HIV/STD Epidemiology Division presented a program on “The Epidemiology of HIV/STD in Texas and East Texas.” The regional director spoke on “Chemical and Biological Terrorism.” Other topics included diabetes, cardiovascular disease, mental health, adolescent health, domestic violence, male health, community initiatives, and rural minority women’s health issues. *For more information, contact William Oliver at (903) 533-5388 or e-mail william.oliver@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Public Health Region 6 & 5 South



Bioterrorism workgroup prepares efficient response.

The Region 6/5 South Bioterrorism Workgroup has completed review of the nine bioterrorism-preparedness plans submitted from 11 local health departments in its jurisdiction and has completed its own grant application to receive funding in support of bioterrorism-preparedness activities in seven counties without local health departments. The bioterrorism workgroup worked closely with all the local health departments receiving funding and facilitated agreements and coordination in two counties where two or more local health departments will provide services under the grant. With the addition of a nurse IV on June 1, the regional Epidemiology Response Team is complete and will begin to implement the regional surveillance activities to assure a timely and efficient response to any bioterrorism event, disease outbreak, or public health emergency. *For more information, contact Luis Gonzalez, Epidemiology Response Team Leader, at (713) 767-3343 or e-mail luis.gonzalez@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Social Work Program surveys clients of Children with Special Health Care Needs.

The Region 6/5 South Social Work staff and other partners throughout the region completed 221 client-interview CSHCN surveys to get feedback on the quality and benefit of services currently offered under the program. The client surveys were obtained through convenience sample via waiting list, pending list, and current clients receiving

CSHCN services. Originally, only 65 clients were targeted for the survey, but the Social Work Program staff put forth an extra effort to survey as many clients as possible out of the 857 currently receiving benefits. In completing the surveys the following languages were used: 33 in English, 181 in Spanish, four in Vietnamese, two in Urdu, and one in Arabic. Regional staff from the Texas Health Steps, TB Elimination, Immunization, Medical Transportation, and Quality Assurance programs also provided assistance in conducting the surveys. Survey results will be compiled and tabulated in the CSHCN office in Austin. *For more information, contact Raymond Turner, Social Work Program Director, at (713) 767-3113 or e-mail raymond.turner@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Public Health Region 7



Presentations made to area veterinarians.

In May, the zoonosis-control veterinarian presented information on animal rabies trends in Texas, Texas' West Nile Virus Response Plan, and the rabies-law review process to veterinarians and technicians at a monthly Brazos Valley Veterinary Medical Association meeting held in College Station. As a result of the meeting, veterinarians from this association have participated with Region 7 Zoonosis Control in West Nile Virus surveillance and have asked for consultations on potential rabies incidents. *For more information, contact Beverlee E. Nix, at (254) 778-6744, ext. 2450, or e-mail beverlee.nix@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Distribution of Bioterrorism funds discussed.

Meetings were held with the four Council of Governments (COG) in Region 7 to discuss the distribution of Bioterrorism funds. As a result of these meetings, the COG will be taking a lead role in convening county-level stakeholders to develop a plan for responding to public health threats and emergencies in each COG region. The region will be contracting with each COG for the planning activities. *For more information, contact Lisa McKamie, at (254) 778-6744, ext. 2311, or e-mail lisa.mckamie@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Medical Transportation Program moves to Temple.

Region 7 has completed the relocation of our Medical Transportation Program. Effective June 3, all staff and program operations are taking place from the Temple headquarters. This move will assure cost savings to the program, as the rent is much lower in Temple compared to Austin. We do not expect any significant disruption of services for our customers. *For more information, contact Leslie Anderson at (254) 778-6744, ext. 2320, or e-mail leslie.anderson@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Texas Health Steps Experts Forums being held throughout summer.

The Texas Health Steps (THS) Experts Forum is a day-long in-service for potential and existing THS providers. The forum is designed and presented with the help of many of our community partners including internal TDH programs, Early Childhood Intervention, National Heritage Insurance Company, and the managed-care plans. The purpose of the forum is to educate and train potential and existing providers about all of the programs, services, and assistance available to them and their customers as a THS provider. Forums will be held in Austin, Temple, Waco, and Bryan-College Station during the next three months. *For more information, contact Leslie Anderson at (254) 778-6744, ext. 2320, or e-mail leslie.anderson@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Public Health Region 8



Texas Environmental Health Association convenes.

Texas Environmental Health Association (TEHA) held its annual Central Texas Regional Conference in Uvalde on May 22-24. Training across the environmental-health spectrum was provided. *For more information, contact Nick Fohn, Environmental Health Program Director, at (830) 278-7173 or e-mail nick.fohn@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Evaluation of Local Emergency Preparedness and Response Inventory tool tested.

TDH regional staff were present when San Antonio Metropolitan Health District hosted the CDC Public Health Practice Program Office staff to serve as a test site for evaluation of a new Local Emergency Preparedness and Response Inventory tool. Dr. Chris Bradshaw of the CDC and former TDH resident in Preventive Medicine presented the document, which will serve as a tool for rapid assessment of state and local capacity to respond to bioterrorism, outbreaks of infectious disease, and other public health threats and emergencies. The Inventories include measures to assess progress towards meeting the benchmarks and critical and enhanced capacities described in the grant guidance for Fiscal Year 2002 Supplemental Funds for Public Health Preparedness and Response to Bioterrorism. *For more information, contact W.S. Riggins Jr., Regional Director, at (210) 949-2003 or e-mail chip.riggins@tdh.state.tx.us.*



County Advisory Board of Health being created in Kendall County.

Region 8 staff began meeting with the county judge in Kendall County to assist in the creation of a County Advisory Board of Health. TDH has had a very successful contract with that county for the provision of environmental-health services. The formation of an advisory board is the next step in establishing a local public health system there. *For more information, contact Bill Lydon, Community Oriented Public Health, at (210) 949-2032 or e-mail bill.lydon@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Public Health Region 9 & 10



Brewster County residents surveyed on health and environment.

On May 10, the regional director and an epidemiologist presented the Brewster County Health and Environmental Survey results at community meetings in Terlingua and Alpine. The survey, conducted by mail in English and Spanish, was requested by concerned county residents in order to: (1) identify possible links between changing environmental conditions and community health status; (2) prioritize community health and environmental concerns; (3) identify specific areas for community action; and (4) provide a baseline to monitor future changes in community health status. The response rate was 33.6 percent. The most commonly cited health problem was lack of access to medical care, followed by specific health conditions, including cancer, allergies, diabetes, pulmonary or respiratory problems, heart problems, and asthma. Lifestyle, water supply, and air pollution were also mentioned as important health problems in the county. *For more information, contact Robert Garcia at (915) 834-7675 or e-mail robert.garcia@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Border Health Institute applies for grant.

The Border Health Institute submitted an application for community grant funding (\$335,600) to the El Paso Empowerment Zone on June 3. The funds will be used to hire

a project director, provide administrative support and accounting services for the BHI, develop a ten-year strategic plan, and prepare a master plan for the BHI campus. *For more information, contact Gale Morrow, Deputy Regional Director, at (915) 834-7675 or e-mail gale.morrow@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Pecos health department recognized.

The Pecos County Community Health Center is now recognized as a full-service local health department by TDH's Office of Public Health Practice. PCCHC, located in Fort Stockton, will join six other local health departments in the region in receiving public health preparedness and bioterrorism response funds. *For more information, contact Gale Morrow, Deputy Regional Director, at (915) 834-7675 or e-mail gale.morrow@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Commissioner visits San Angelo.

Eduardo J. Sanchez, M.D., Texas commissioner of health, visited the San Angelo-Tom Green County Health Department during an April 26 visit to the community. He also met with State Representative Rob Junell and TDH San Angelo staff. *For more information, contact Gale Morrow, Deputy Regional Director, at (915) 834-7675 or e-mail gale.morrow@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Public meetings held to discuss rabies.

Region 9 & 10, Zoonosis Control Division, sponsored public hearings on rabies in El Paso (May 8) and Midland (April 17). Participants, primarily veterinarians and veterinary technicians, overwhelmingly supported the current recommendation for yearly rabies vaccination of cats, dogs, and ferrets. *For more information, contact Kevin Coker at (915) 834-7675 or e-mail kevin.coker@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Obesity Forum meets in El Paso.

Seventy-two participants attended the Obesity Grant Task Force Forum held in El Paso on April 23. The participants recommended ways to address the obesity problem in this area. *For more information, contact Chester Bryant at (915) 834-7675 or chester.bryant@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Public Health Region 11



Rotary International meets in Reynosa, Tamaulipas.

On May 3, the Tuberculosis program manager attended the Rotary International meeting in Reynosa, Mexico, on behalf of Dr. Charles Wallace, Director, TB Elimination Division, to discuss the Rotary International role and the binational projects in Laredo and Nuevo Laredo, as well as the binational project in El Paso.

The commissioner of health for the State of Tamaulipas gave an overview of tuberculosis worldwide and the statistics for the state of Tamaulipas. He presented a plan on three phases of importance and discussed the possibility of funding a Center of Excellence at the hospital in Matamoros, Tamaulipas, by Rotary International. He asked for needed equipment for the laboratories and particularly spoke of setting up a laboratory in Miguel Aleman, Tamaulipas. He also talked about nutritional supplements for patients, medication costs, and amounts needed. He did ask for immediate action from Rotary International to get funding to begin a TB public-awareness campaign for both sides of the border. *For more information, contact Domingo J. Navarro, TB Elimination Program Manager, at (956) 423-0130 or e-mail domingo.navarro@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Counter-terrorism topic at Joint Response Team meeting in Brownsville.

On May 13-14, two regional employees attended a two-day U.S./Mexico Joint Response Team (JRT) meeting in Brownsville. The meeting was hosted by U.S. EPA Chemical Emergency Preparedness Prevention Office (CEPPO), Washington, D.C.; DPA Region 6, Dallas; and EPA Region 9, San Francisco, Calif. The meeting objectives were to exchange information among federal, state, and local agencies regarding their counter-terrorism efforts; identify needs and make recommendations to ensure the “continuity of operation” and the viability of sister-city plans; identify ways to incorporate counter-terrorism into sister-city plans; and discuss and resolve outstanding JRT issues. *For more information, contact Ramiro Gonzales, Environmental and Consumer Health Director, at (956) 423-0130, ext. 637, or e-mail ramiro.gonzales@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Diabetes care across the border.

On May 23, the regional director attended a workshop on Diabetes Care Across The Border. The goals of defining a binational conference to follow later this year were discussed as part of the workshop agenda as well as the establishment of a binational, multi-academic diabetes-management center in McAllen. The director shared information on local and state diabetes disease in South Texas. The workgroup discussed future collaborations with state and federal levels on both sides of the border. *For more information, contact Dr. Brian Smith, Regional Director, at (956) 423-0130 or e-mail brian.smith@tdh.state.tx.us.*